

Mike Barbarula



Born in Hoboken, NJ, and raised in the South Norwalk section of Norwalk, **Mike Barbarula** was very active in local sports growing up. But it wasn't until much later in life, after his own sons were born, that he really made an impact on sports in this city.

Barbarula attended Benjamin Franklin Junior High School, where he was a member of the junior varsity basketball team and the following year, 1947, captain of the varsity squad, helping both teams win championships. In fact, he calls scoring 20 points against Center Junior High in the JV city championship game in 1946 one of the highlights of his athletic career.

A 1951 graduate of Norwalk High School, where he was a member of the National Honor Society, Barbarula played fullback for the Green and White football team where his teammates included Gene Callahan and Sanford Anderson. Barbarula also played intramural

basketball at NHS, serving as captain and helping his teams win championships all three years.

Barbarula was also a fixture in the local recreation basketball leagues where he played with the Riversides and the Royals, and his teammates included Al Boczer, Tom Corbo, and Joe Lametta, all former Norwalk Old Timers honorees. One of Barbarula's fondest memories was beating the Norwalk Squires for the city championship in 1948. During this time, he also played softball with the Sons of Italy and Roy Brothers.

The 'second half' of Mike Barbarula's athletic career, however, didn't begin until years later. As his sons Michael Jr. and Christopher became involved with Little League baseball, the older Barbarula got involved himself in 1965. He volunteered in the National Little League, now known as the Ben Whone National Little League, and Clarence Fanning, another former Old Timer award winner, made Barbarula a coach on the VFW team to help manager Paul Alberta.

But within two months, Alberta stepped down and Barbarula took over as manager of the VFW team, a job he held for the next 29 years. He led the team to several championships and had them in contention almost every year. During his 29 years as manager, Barbarula also worked with a number of coaches, of which only two stayed five or more years, Bill McCabe and Bob Avery, who was honored by the Old Timers last year.

In addition to his managing duties, Barbarula also became treasurer of the league for a number of years. He was among a small group of dedicated men who gave up their time to help run the league, a list which included the names George Buschbaum, Herman Zeitland, Lou D'Orso, Lefty Geddes, Harry Faust, Rick Marrone, and Fanning.

Even after Barbarula had retired from the league his influence is still felt. During Opening Day ceremonies in 1997, Barbarula was one of three men the Ben Whone National LL Board of Directors honored for their many years of service by naming their three age brackets the Michael Barbarula Sr. Major Division, the Lefty Geddes Triple-A Division, and the Clarence Fanning Minor Division.

Barbarula's involvement in local sports wasn't restricted to only Little League or, for that matter, just baseball. While still managing VFW, he also coached in the Norwalk Pony and Colt leagues from 1968-'72, winning the Colt League championship with his son Michael in 1972 with the Stafford Higgins team.

In 1970, Barbarula also found time to organize and coach the St. Phillip's Church recreation basketball program, and in 1971, while coaching two baseball teams and a pair of basketball teams, he won three championships.

Married to the former Anne Marino for the past 51 years, Barbarula worked 47 years in the plumbing industry and the last seven and a half years working at the Norwalk Probate Court before retiring on April 1 of this year. He now spends his time watching his four grandchildren participate in various sports.